



# Community Health Needs Assessment & Health Improvement Planning (CHNA & HIP): a collaborative strategy to move toward integration

## BACKGROUND

At least every five years, local boards of health lead a community-wide discussion with stakeholders and residents about their community's health needs. After identifying needs in the community, the next step is to identify objectives and strategies to address those needs. The process, Community Health Needs Assessment and Health Improvement Plan (CHNA & HIP) is a fundamental element in statewide health planning. CHNA & HIP has more than a 20-year history in Iowa and represents local action to promote and protect the health of Iowans.

New federal requirements for tax-exempt hospitals to conduct community health needs assessments present an opportunity for hospitals and local boards of health/local public health agencies to join forces to identify community needs and craft strategies for meeting them. Historically, hospitals and public health have worked cooperatively, especially in communities where public health agencies and hospitals are co-located. Moreover, thirty-one Iowa hospitals are the subcontractors for local public health services in their counties. The federal requirements present an opportunity for greater collaboration between hospitals and local public health agencies and set the stage for a long-term partnership in health promotion and disease prevention activities.

To integrate Iowa's established community health needs assessment process for local boards of health with the federal requirements for tax-exempt hospitals, the Iowa Department of Public Health (IDPH) is encouraging a collaborative process in conducting a joint CHNA and in developing a community-wide HIP.

## ACTION STEPS

**Share relevant data:** Hospitals can access health snapshots for every Iowa county on the IDPH website, specifically the Iowa Public Health Tracking Portal: <https://pht.idph.state.ia.us/reports/Pages/default.aspx>. The County Health Snapshots provide an overview of key health indicators for local communities. Links to additional data sources are posted on the IDPH CHNA & HIP website: [www.idph.state.ia.us/chnahip/](http://www.idph.state.ia.us/chnahip/). The department also encourages local public health agencies to share relevant local health data sources.

**Promote efficiency in Iowa CHNA&HIP processes:** Local boards of health report the results of their local CHNA&HIP processes to IDPH for use in a statewide health needs assessment and health improvement plan (*Healthy Iowans*). Local boards of health that work with hospitals to develop a joint comprehensive CHNA and community-wide HIP may use the information from the joint CHNA & HIP to complete the required reports to IDPH. A separate CHNA & HIP process will not be necessary.

**Share reporting information:** IDPH encourages local boards of health and hospitals to share with each other any existing community needs assessments, health improvement plans, and annual reports.

**Facilitate a collaborative process:** IDPH will inform both hospitals and local boards of health about tools, updates, and training related to community health needs assessments and health improvement planning. This information is available on the IDPH CHNA & HIP website: [www.idph.state.ia.us/chnahip/](http://www.idph.state.ia.us/chnahip/).